

South West Hospital and Health Service

PULSE

MARCH 2025 EDITION



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We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands across the South West. We also pay our respects to the current and future Elders, for they will inherit the responsibility of keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture alive, and for creating a better life for the generations to follow.

We believe the future happiness and wellbeing of all Australians and our future generations will be enhanced by valuing and taking pride in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—the oldest living culture of humanity.

SOUTH WEST TRADITIONAL OWNERS

- Augathella – Bidjara** (Bid-jara)
- Bollon – Kooma** (Coo-ma)
- Charleville – Bidjara** (Bid-jara)
- Cunnamulla – Kunja** (Koun-yah) with other interests
- Dirranbandi – Yuwaalaraay/Euahlayi people** (You-wal-a-ray/ You-al-e-i)
- Eromanga – Boonthamurra** (Boon-tha-murra)
- Eulo – Budjiti** (Bud-ji-ti)
- Injune – Bidjara** (Bid-jara)
- Mitchell – Gunggari** (Gon-gari)
- Morven – Gunggari** (Gon-gari)
- Mungindi – Kamilaroi** (Car-milla-roy)
- Quilpie – Boonthamurra, Mardigan, Wongkumara** with other interests
- Roma – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)
- St George – Kooma** (Coo-ma) with **Kamilaroi, Mandandanji, Bigambul and Gungarri** interests
- Surat – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)
- Thargomindah – Kullilli** (Coo-lee-lar)
- Wallumbilla – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)

This newsletter is produced by the South West Hospital and Health Service. All feedback and contributions are welcome. All published material has been approved by the Health Service Chief Executive.

Contact: SWHHS_Communications@health.qld.gov.au

Cover Image: International Women's Day guest speakers in Charleville (from left) Vanessa Alexander, Nicky McKellar, Georgena Watt



QUALITY



COMPASSION



ACCOUNTABILITY



ENGAGEMENT



ADAPTABILITY

“ There is growing evidence supporting a shift towards ‘grow your own’ approaches to recruiting, training and retaining health professionals from and for rural communities. ”

Rural and Remote Health Project Report, July 2024



From the Board Chair

In Charleville, I recently had the honour of attending the graduation of four students who had attained their Bachelor of Nursing qualifications with UniSQ. What makes this rather special is that these students had completed their entire academic studies while living and working in various locations in South West Queensland. I extend my sincere congratulations to Megan, Cassandra, Karen and Lucy on your momentous achievement and wish you all the best as you commence your nursing career with the South West HHS.

Immense appreciation is also extended to the SQRH team who diligently supported these four students, and continue to support undergraduates with their studies. The Southern Qld Rural Health initiative is a collaboration between The University of Queensland, the University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service and is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health.

We often talk about ‘growing your own’ (GYO) workforce, and this is a classic example of the GYO initiative in action. The program involves placing a constant cocoon of academic nurturing around students in the rural location where they live, which enables them to undertake their formal university studies and work placements, without having to relocate to a larger city.

The South West HHS has embraced GYO as part of the solution to creating a sustainable local workforce pipeline. The GYO initiative also encompasses career progression opportunities for many health staff at varying professional levels.

Growing Your Own is something that South West Queensland has done well for over 100 years. At the Roma Hospital, there is a garden and plaque known as the Matron Moss Garden, which in 2025 is undergoing revitalisation work. Matron Moss was born in Charleville in 1925 and grew up near Augathella. In 1943, she commenced her nursing training in Charleville. In 1968 she was appointed Matron at the Mitchell Hospital before relocating to Roma, where she worked until retiring in 1987. Her valued contribution to leading healthcare teams is recognised today, in a memorial garden at the Hospital.





Matron Moss may have been one of our earlier GYO's, however there are now numerous current and past employees who have similar career progression stories. As a Board member, it is an honour to travel throughout our region and to constantly meet and hear from many current employees who have similar stories of developing and growing their careers in their remote location where they work, while being supported by the South West HHS to do so. Our sincere gratitude is extended to all staff who step up and undertake further professional learning, whether at the vocational or tertiary level, while continuing to be employed at the South West HHS. You are all champions!

The South West Hospital and Health Board members had their January meeting in Roma, where we were able to meet and receive feedback from many community members at a 'meet and greet' session at the Roma Hospital. The Board also met with staff and patients as they toured the Hospital and Westhaven Residential Aged Care facility before getting down to work at the Board meeting.

In March, we will convene at Dirranbandi for our Board meeting and connection opportunities with staff members and health consumers.

Board out and about





From the Health Service Chief Executive

Welcome to our first edition of 2025! As always, this edition is filled with incredible examples of person-centred care being delivered across the South West for the benefit of our communities, whom we are privileged to serve each and every day.

First, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the recent weather events in South East Queensland. For those with family, friends, or loved ones in the area, I hope they are safe, and please know that our thoughts are with them.

Here in the South West, we understand all too well the impact of natural disasters—whether it's flooding, drought, heatwaves, or bushfires. I have no doubt that the resilience and strength you demonstrate in our region will extend to supporting our neighbours in the South East.

We also recognise that extreme weather events like Cyclone Alfred can be stressful and disruptive. If you or your loved ones have been affected, please know that support is available:

- ➔ Community Recovery Hotline – 1800 173 349
(available 24/7 for information and assistance)
- ➔ Community Recovery Lifeline Hotline – 1800 116 671
(24/7 confidential service providing access to specialist disaster counselling).

I feel incredibly grateful to work alongside such a dedicated team. Already this year, you have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to delivering the best possible healthcare to our communities. Even though we are one of the most geographically isolated health services, the way we stay connected—both with each other and with our communities—remains at the heart of everything we do.

During my recent visits to facilities across the region, I was deeply impressed by the passion and dedication of our teams. Your commitment to providing high-quality care is evident in every interaction, and I want to acknowledge and commend you all.

This year has already seen some important milestones, including the launch of our Sexual Harassment Prevention Plan, Disability Strategy and Action Plan, and our continued focus on Health Equity. These initiatives reaffirm our commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive and supportive healthcare environment.

In this month's edition, make sure you take time to catch up on the Wellness our Way pilot which is an exciting partnership that will further our mission of building healthy communities across the South West.

This is just one of many inspiring stories featured in this issue, and I encourage you to take the time to read and celebrate the great work happening across your health service.

Hope you enjoy the first edition of 2025!

Dr Anthony Brown
Health Service Chief Executive

Even though we are one of the most geographically isolated health services, the way we stay connected – both with each other and with our communities – remains at the heart of everything we do.



OUR COMMUNITIES

SOUTH WEST HHS DISABILITY STRATEGY 2024 – 2026: OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

South West HHS has taken a significant step toward ensuring equitable health care and employment opportunities for people with disability with the launch of its inaugural South West Disability Strategy 2024 – 2026 in January.

Approved by the South West Hospital and Health Board at the end of 2024, this is a further significant commitment towards fostering a truly inclusive and accessible health service for all.

Health Service Chief Executive, Dr Anthony Brown, emphasised the importance of this milestone for South West communities.

“Addressing barriers to equality and accessibility experienced by people with disability is not only the right thing to do, it’s also a clear obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” Anthony said.

“While all of us at South West HHS work to create a fair and inclusive place for people with disability, there’s always more we can do.

He said this strategy demonstrated our genuine commitment to an inclusive health service where colleagues with disability were valued, respected and could contribute to our communities.

“It outlines our responsibilities to remove all barriers for people with disability, ensuring they have equitable access to quality health services and employment opportunities,” he said.

“Under the Disability Services Act (Qld) 2006, all Queensland government departments must develop a Disability Service Plan.

“Queensland Health published its inaugural plan in April 2023, which provided a foundation for us to take further steps tailored to the specific local needs of our rural and remote communities.”

A key strength of the Disability Strategy is that it has been shaped by direct input from 16 individuals who joined a dedicated South West HHS Disability Advisory Group which played a crucial role in shaping the strategy’s priorities.

“Given Advisory Group members all live in the South West region—and either have a disability, lived experience of disability, or are passionate about improving disability services—our action plan commitments have been developed by and for people who rely on our current services and support, and therefore address matters that are of the utmost importance” Anthony said.

The South West Disability Strategy is more than just a plan - it’s a clear demonstration of our collective dedication to removing barriers and ensuring that people with disability are valued, respected and fully included in all aspects of health service delivery and employment.



The strategy identifies four key focus areas:

1 Inclusion

Creating a diverse health service that offers equal opportunities and embeds inclusive behaviours to create safe, respectful and inclusive environments for employees and patients with disabilities.

2 Accessibility

Ensuring health services and information are easily accessible, and provided in new and innovative ways that encourage people with disability to fully engage in healthcare that meets their needs.

3 Improved service delivery

Ensuring healthcare across all divisions is accessible, person centred and high quality, and meets the needs of people with disability.

4 Rights and respect

Fostering a culture where the rights and choices of people with disability are upheld and respected.

With approximately one in five Australians living with disability, South West HHS is committed to promoting valued roles for employees with disability and ensuring that workplaces reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Anthony therefore added that these priorities reflected the insights and experiences shared by Advisory Group members and would guide South West HHS in its ongoing efforts to enhance disability-inclusive services.

“Creating an open and inclusive workplace culture is essential for meaningful change,” he said.

“South West HHS recognises the importance of valuing diversity, respecting cultural backgrounds, and ensuring that all patients and staff experience an environment that is easy to access and where their choices are respected.

“We all have a part to play to ensure an open and inclusive workplace culture—where diversity is valued, cultural backgrounds are respected—and all patients and colleagues are provided an environment that is easy to access, where choices are respected and where all staff are sufficiently supported in terms of disability awareness.”

Looking Ahead:

A Shared Commitment to Better Services

South West HHS’s Disability Strategy and Action Plan set clear goals for the future, ensuring continued progress toward a more inclusive health service.

Anthony reaffirmed his commitment to working alongside staff and the community, stating, “Through our Disability Strategy and Action Plan goals, I look forward to working alongside you as we continue to grow our service to provide safe, effective, responsible and sustainable rural and remote health services in partnership that people trust and value.”

Staff and community members can access the South West Disability Strategy 2024 – 2026 and supporting documents online.

“This strategy marks a significant milestone, but the journey toward full inclusion and accessibility continues,” he said.

“Together, we can make South West HHS a place where everyone—regardless of ability—can thrive and contribute.”

[Read Strategy →](#)

South West HHS Disability Strategy 2024-2027

Our goal
To provide high-quality healthcare and employment opportunities that are inclusive, accessible and responsive, and meet the unique needs of people with disability.

Our responsibility
Addressing the barriers to equality and accessibility experienced by people with disability is not only the right thing to do, it's also a clear obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While all of us at SWHHS work to create a fair and inclusive place for people with disability, there's always more we can do.

Our purpose
This strategy demonstrates our genuine commitment to an inclusive health service where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to our operations. It defines our responsibilities to remove barriers for people with disability, ensuring they have equitable access to quality health services and employment opportunities.

Our actions

- Acknowledging the lived experience of people with disability, consulting widely for the implementation of this strategy, and committing to co-designing any policies or processes that affect their lives
- Increase employment of people with disability, and support employees to participate fully in the workplace
- Increase the capability of the workforce to meet the needs of people with disability through education and training
- Ensure people with disability are offered flexibility, and have access to alternative arrangements
- Ensure SWHHS facilities are fully and easily accessible, and welcoming to people with disability
- Provide information that is clear, accessible and meets the unique language and communication needs of people with disability
- Better meet the complex healthcare needs of people with disability by improving the quality of care
- Build awareness of the barriers people with disability face, fostering a deeper understanding of their unique needs and experience.

Our priorities

- 1 Inclusion**
Creating a diverse health service that offers equal opportunities and embeds inclusive behaviours to create safe, respectful and inclusive environments for employees and patients with disabilities.
- 2 Accessibility**
Ensuring health services and information are easily accessible, and provided in new and innovative ways that encourage people with disability to fully engage in healthcare that meets their needs.
- 3 Improved service delivery**
Ensuring healthcare across all divisions is accessible, person centred and high quality, and meets the needs of people with disability.
- 4 Rights and respect**
Fostering a culture where the rights and choices of people with disability are upheld and respected.

SOUTH WEST HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICE
Building better health for the South West
southwest.health.qld.gov.au



CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025 – ACCELERATING ACTION TOGETHER

This year's International Women's Day (IWD) was celebrated over a week across the South West!

Across the South West we celebrate all women. We celebrate those who came before us, those who stand beside us now, and those who will come after.

Health Service Chief Executive Dr Anthony Brown said International Women's Day on March 8 was an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made towards gender equality—and the work that still lies ahead.

"The theme for 2025, "Accelerate Action," was a call to step forward with urgency, ensuring that equality isn't something for future generations to achieve, but something we work towards today and every day," Anthony said.

"Here in the South West HHS, where our workforce is made up of 85% women, we don't just talk about accelerating action—we live it.

"Every day, across our hospitals, clinics, and communities, women in our workforce and beyond are leading change, driving progress and shaping the future of healthcare.

"From frontline clinicians to operational staff, leaders and caregivers, the impact of women in our HHS extends far beyond our workplaces.

"They are also the heart of families and communities, balancing professional and personal responsibilities in ways that are often unseen and underappreciated.

"This International Women's Day, I wanted to acknowledge and celebrate the many ways women in the South West are already accelerating action—whether by mentoring colleagues, advocating for equity, challenging outdated norms, or simply leading by example. It takes a whole team, a whole community, and a whole health system working together to make real, lasting change."

Some of our staff have shared their personal reflections on what this day means to them ...



Emma Humphreys

DIRECTOR ACTIVITY BASED FUNDING

"As we gather to celebrate International Women's Day we are reminded that while progress has been made, we still need to keep moving forward. Our theme today 'Accelerating Action' reminds us that time is still passing by, it is a day to promote gender equality and highlight the ongoing efforts needed to create a fairer society.

The day for me resembles a time of reflection for education and awareness about women's equality, celebrate women's achievements and support women to advance. In Australia, the first International Women's Day was celebrated in 1928, with the United Nations designating 1975 International Women's Year.

On this day I reflect on the unique and often challenging roles I balance as mother, community member and employee. As a mother of two daughters, I am deeply committed to nurturing my children, guiding them through life, helping them build the foundations they need to succeed. In my community, I take pride in contributing to a collective effort to lift others, creating spaces where everyone can thrive and feel supported. And as employee, I bring my skills, passion, and determination to the workplace, navigating the complexities of tasks, collaboration, and professional growth through a supportive environment. These roles can often be overwhelming, but they are also immensely rewarding. Today, I would like to celebrate the strength, resilience and impact women have and the importance of continuing to support one another as we strive for equality, empowerment and kindness for ourselves, our families, and our communities."



Billie-Jo Hurle

PRINCIPAL PROJECT OFFICER

“If you have ever felt the strain of being non-clinical in the world of healthcare, or perhaps being a woman in what might be perceived a male-dominated business, then you are not alone – BECAUSE SO HAVE I. And like me, you can likely overlay one over the other to get the full effect.

While I have not personally felt disadvantaged by this in the South West, I am certainly not naïve to the perceptions and impacts this has (and continues to have) on those around me. I feel it is my responsibility to not just listen and support, but to learn from and advocate on behalf of those that have not built up the confidence to do so... yet.

We have so many strong and skilled women cascading throughout the organisation headed up by our Board Chair and exactly 50% of both the Board and Executive Leadership Teams’. I am constantly impressed by the respect and value shown to women and non-clinicians – like me – and am grateful to form part of what I consider South West’s legacy.

For those who continue to challenge themselves, others and the leadership landscape to get to who and where YOU want to be – keep going! Remember that International Women’s Day is just one day of the year, and as a woman, you have the other 364 days to make choices that will collectively forge women’s advancement – whether that be at home or in the workplace.

Stop saying “I’m just” and start saying “I AM”.

So let me introduce myself. I AM Billie-Jo. I AM an administration professional, and I AM proud to be an employee and consumer of the South West.”



Shelley Lawton

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLAND HEALTH ENGAGEMENT

This year’s theme “Accelerate Action” means a lot to me, it’s the drive that makes me accountable for continuing to pave the way for our women of the next generation, for generations to come. By being, knowing and doing this, we empower women to have a voice, to speak up, speak out. Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.

As the Executive Director for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Engagement for South West HHS this position has provided me with an opportunity to lead meaningful work, working as part of a team that is doing its best. Informed capability to improve health equity for first nations people, women included, gives me fire in the belly as I am very passionate about addressing healthcare disparities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and all of our rural and remote communities. Every day I have the privilege to work with inspiring women both internal and external, who have or are paving the way on this journey. I encourage women to step up. Don’t wait for somebody to ask you.

A woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing. She goes where she will without pretence and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself and herself only. – Maya Angelou

Supporting Women’s Health and Wellbeing in Charleville

As part of our Women’s Week celebrations, the HOPE Program welcomed Melissa Rowland and Dominique Bell from the Queensland Women and Girls Health Promotion Program (Queensland Health).

Their visit kicked off at the Women’s Wellbeing event, followed by a busy few days connecting with local agencies and service providers. A highlight of their time in Charleville was a meet-and-greet morning tea with students at Charleville High School.

Melissa and Dominique are eager to partner with the HOPE Program and local communities in Charleville & Cunnamulla to develop a project focused on improving the health and wellbeing of young women and girls.





SPOTLIGHT ON CAROLYN MANDERSLOOT: LEADING PALLIATIVE CARE IN SOUTH WEST QUEENSLAND

We are excited to highlight the work of Carolyn Mandersloot, South West HHS's Clinical Nurse Consultant for Palliative Care. With a remarkable 35 years of experience as a registered nurse, Carolyn has dedicated the last two decades to advancing palliative care, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Carolyn's expertise stems from her time working with Little Haven Palliative Care, a non-profit community-based specialist nursing service based in Gympie. There, she was instrumental in developing a model of care that not only supported patients but also actively engaged the community, empowering them to provide care to the dying and those grieving.

Her passion for improving palliative care has now brought her to Charleville, where she continues to work with the local community to ensure that people have the option to die at home, within their local area, and on their own country.

Carolyn firmly believes that achieving this goal requires a community-wide effort to become "death literate"—that is, educated about end-of-life options and prepared to have difficult but essential conversations.

A key part of this mission is National Advanced Care Planning Week, which this year takes place between 17 and 21 March. This week is a perfect opportunity to start those conversations with loved ones about life planning.

Carolyn encourages everyone to think about their wishes for end of life and to take practical steps to ensure these wishes are documented in an Advance Care Plan. This plan also allows individuals to appoint someone they trust to speak on their behalf should they become unable to communicate their preferences.

"It takes a whole community to become death literate," Carolyn said. "When people are educated about their choices, it empowers them to make the best decisions for themselves and their families."

As we approach Advanced Care Planning Week, take the time to reflect on your own life planning and discuss your wishes with family and friends. Remember, it's never too early to have these conversations and ensure that your choices are known and respected when the time comes.

*Carolyn Mandersloot
South West HHS's Clinical Nurse Consultant for Palliative Care*



For more information on Advance Care Planning, or to get help with your own planning, resources are available online.

[Find out more →](#)

Or contact Carolyn Mandersloot directly through the Palliative Care team.



WELLNESS MY WAY: A MORE PERSONALISED APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING

South West Queensland is paving the way for a healthier future with Wellness my Way—a free, personalised health and wellbeing program designed to support individuals in making sustainable, healthy choices.

Led by Kathy Morrow, South West HHS’s Healthy Communities Team Leader, the program offers a single ‘front door’ to prevention programs, making it easier than ever for people to take charge of their health.

Kathy said at the heart of Wellness my Way was a free online health check, allowing individuals to assess their current health and wellbeing.

“From there, participants receive personalised support through a telephone coach who helps them develop a tailored health action plan,” Kathy said.

“Depending on individual needs, participants are then connected to recommended programs and resources—accessible online, over the phone, or in person within their community.”

The health check can be completed online via a phone, tablet, or computer, or by calling 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and asking for the Way to Wellness service (available Monday–Friday, 8am–8pm).

Kathy said, since its launch, Wellness my Way had already made a difference in the South West with:

- Over 170 health assessments completed
- 47% of participants creating a personal action plan
- 31.5% of participants are male, with numbers increasing in recent months
- 11.3% of participants to date identify as First Nations peoples
- 168 referrals made to local and statewide health programs

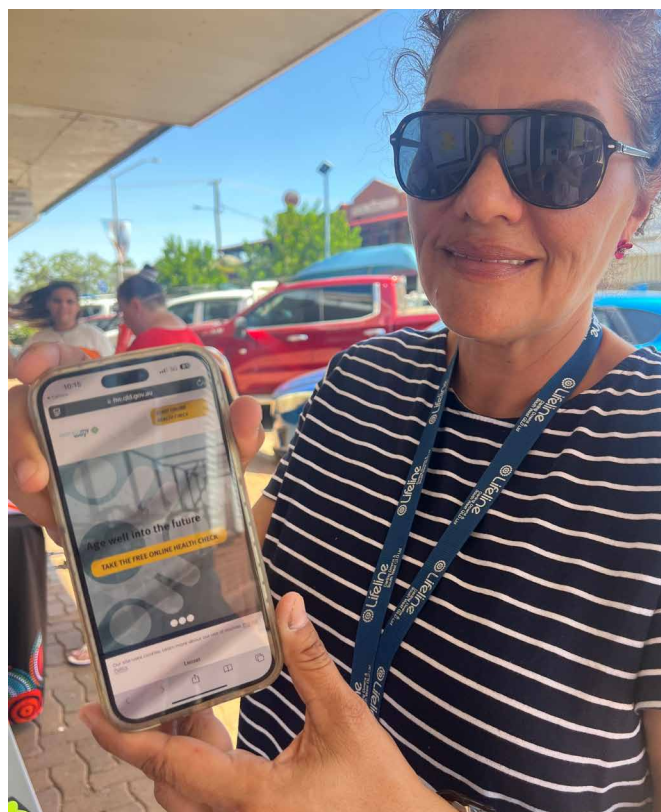
She said the team had been actively spreading awareness, visiting facilities, and sharing resources to expand the program’s reach across the region.

“Wellness my Way is a joint initiative of the South West HHS and Health and Wellbeing Queensland, along with Queensland Health’s Health Contact Centre and the Health and Wellbeing Centre for Research Innovation at The University of Queensland,” Kathy said.

“Together, we are working together to co-design, implement, and evaluate the program to ensure it meets the needs of the South West community. In support of this, South West HHS is leading stakeholder engagement and ensuring local voices are heard through consultation and continuous quality improvement.”

You can help support a healthier South West by:

- Completing the health assessment if you haven’t already
- Talking about Wellness my Way with family, friends, colleagues, and community members
- Encouraging others to take a health check
- Displaying program resources in your workplace or community.



For more information and resources contact Kathy Morrow:
Kathy.Morrow@health.qld.gov.au
or **0407 153 052**



ACCREDITATION SUCCESS FOR OUR AUGATHELLA AND MITCHELL MEDICAL PRACTICES

South West HHS is proud to congratulate both Mitchell Medical Practice and Augathella Doctors Surgery teams on successfully achieving accreditation under the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards 5th Edition.

Following a rigorous assessment by the Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL), both practices demonstrated their commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare, meeting national standards for safety, quality, and patient care. South West HHS Chief Executive Dr Anthony Brown commended both teams for their ongoing dedication and professionalism.

“Achieving accreditation is a significant milestone that reflects the hard work, collaboration, and commitment of our healthcare teams,” Anthony said.

“It’s also a testament to the exceptional level of care provided to our patients and the continuous efforts to uphold best practice in primary healthcare.”

Anthony acknowledged the time and effort involved in the accreditation process, highlighting the importance of maintaining high standards across the health service.

“This accomplishment demonstrates the strength and resilience of our medical practices and reinforces the trust that our communities place in their local healthcare providers. The entire South West team is incredibly proud of both Mitchell and Augathella for their outstanding achievements,” he said.

Accreditation ensures that medical practices adhere to nationally recognised standards, providing patients with confidence in the quality and safety of their care. The successful accreditation of both practices reflects their dedication to continuous improvement and excellence in service delivery.

Congratulations to both of our teams at Mitchell Medical Practice and Augathella Doctors Surgery for their well-earned recognition!



NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE EQUIPMENT STRENGTHENS ROMA HOSPITAL’S PREPAREDNESS

South West HHS has taken a significant step forward in emergency preparedness with the recent acquisition of two Sandpiper mass casualty bags for Roma Hospital.

These essential kits, handed over to Dr Dan Halliday, Director of Medical Services at Roma Hospital, are designed to enhance the region’s ability to respond swiftly and effectively to critical incidents.

The Sandpiper Bag is a highly specialised, standardised kit equipped with life-saving medical supplies. It allows clinicians to perform both early and advanced interventions, ensuring that patients in urgent need receive immediate and appropriate care.

These bags play a crucial role in managing mass casualty situations, reinforcing the South West region’s ability to deliver coordinated and effective emergency medical responses.

“This underscores South West HHS’s dedication to innovative emergency response solutions,” Dan said.

“The introduction of the Sandpiper Bags, paired with Pre-Hospital Emergency Care (PHEC) training, ensures our clinicians are equipped and confident in responding to emergencies with the necessary expertise.”

He said the introduction of the Sandpiper Bags aligned with the South West HHS’s ongoing commitment to enhancing disaster resilience and supporting frontline medical professionals was a milestone for the South West HHS.

“By providing advanced tools and training, the South West HHS is ensuring that its teams are prepared to deliver life-saving care under high-pressure conditions. This development marks a major advancement in the health service’s emergency preparedness strategy, positioning Roma Hospital and the broader South West region to respond more effectively to mass casualty events and critical emergencies as and when they occur.”



Dr Dan Halliday (left) with Manager, Disaster Management, Bob Khalsa



MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY CONSUMER ADVISORY GROUP RECONNECTS IN 2025

The South West Mental Health Community Consumer Advisory Group (MHCCAG) held its first meeting for 2025 on 17 February, taking a significant step forward in community engagement and service collaboration.

With strong interest from members and representatives of each of our local Community Advisory Networks (CANs) and wider non-government service partners, the group remains committed to sharing vital information on mental health services and referral pathways.

About the MHCCAG

South West HHS's Service Director Mental Health, Aurora Bermudez, said the MHCCAG had been established to ensure consumers, carers, and community organisations play an active role in the planning, delivery and assessment of mental health services across the South West HHS.

Aurora said the group's objectives included:

- Acting as a conduit between the community and the HHS to gather insights on mental health needs and issues
- Advocating for wider mental health awareness and reducing stigma
- Providing feedback on current service gaps and supporting service enhancement
- Facilitating wider community engagement activities and information sharing.

"Although the committee had not convened for 18 months, recent consumer consultations had continued during this time through the South West *Three Seeds Project*. This initiative identified urgent resourcing needs to support the region's 10-year mental health roadmap and align with Queensland Health's *Better Care Together* five-year plan for Mental Health, Alcohol, and Other Drug Services," Aurora said.

"The project highlighted gaps in service accessibility and identified a lack of connection between available services, which sometimes led to consumers not seeking help."

Aurora said, as a result, South West HHS had recently successfully secured additional mental health clinicians, expanding service capacity.

However, recruitment remains a challenge, and so efforts continue to attract additional staff, including a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and suicide prevention and aftercare roles," she said.

"A key outcome from the *Three Seeds Project* is the adoption of a 'no wrong door' approach, ensuring all referrals are actively directed to the most appropriate service provider.

Looking ahead, exciting new initiatives are underway, including employment of a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and the exploration of innovative care models to enhance psychiatric support. Consumer participation in the co-design of these services will therefore be critical over the next two years."

Aurora added with mental health service demand rising— by 25% in both the past year and the year prior — that South West HHS and its partners remained committed to meeting the community's needs.

If you are interested in joining the advisory group, or finding out more about our work, you can email SWHHS_Board@health.qld.gov.au for more information.



GRAD NURSES HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

South West new nurse graduates February 2025

A total of 28 new nursing and three new midwifery graduates started their careers with the South West HHS in mid-February.

South West HHS Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery Services, Chris Small said this year's February graduate intake of 31 was just three fewer than last year's record February intake of 34.

"I believe this year's intake is reflective of the very strong ongoing interest among graduates in joining the health service – and we also hope to accept a further smaller intake in August," he said.

"It's wonderful to be welcoming these new graduates to the South West, and I'm sure that they will all enjoy rewarding careers. All 31 new graduates undergo a week's orientation at Roma Hospital before being assigned to health facilities throughout the region.

"They will then go on to work in a variety of areas, including acute medical, surgical, emergency, maternity, aged care, community and primary health and supporting the hospital-based ambulance in the facilities where these are located," Chris said.

Chris said the South West HHS's 12-month graduate program had been reviewed in 2023 and was now aligned with the endorsed graduate certificate level by Central Queensland University for the graduates' future career pathway.

The intake included three dual-degree nursing and paramedicine graduates who have undertaken the same 12-month nursing graduate transition program as all the other newly graduated nursing and midwifery staff.

"Once they have completed their 12-month nursing transition program with our health service, they will then rotate between us and the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) for six months at a time over the following two years," he said.

"In many of our smaller, more isolated communities, vital local ambulance services are operated out of the local health facility by hospital and health service employees. Nurses staff these hospital-based ambulances, supported either by a driver employed by the health service or a volunteer coordinated by the QAS. As our nurses are first responders to an incident in these situations, it makes very good sense for them to have both nursing and paramedic skills."

Chris said the South West HHS originally partnered formally with QAS in 2018 to introduce the dual-trained registered nurse/paramedic program – the first in Queensland – following an initial earlier trial. Since then, the dual degree program has proved very popular with graduates.

"It's also an attractive career option as it allows the successful graduate to choose a career either in nursing or paramedicine, and to swap over more easily later in their careers if they want a change. It also improves the capacity of both the health service and the QAS to attract and retain staff as it gives more options for their future career progression," Chris said.

The South West HHS is committed to providing further training opportunities for graduate nurses and midwives.

"There's no denying how important nurses are in our community and to our health service.

"Nurses make up about 44 per cent of our entire health service workforce; they provide care at almost every stage of our lives across our GP clinics, our hospitals and in the community. I wish each and every one of the nurses starting over the next few weeks best of luck as they embark on this next stage of their careers.

"I'd also like to pass on my thanks to the Roma Hospital Auxiliary who kindly hosted a wonderful welcome function during our graduates orientation week.

"And I'd also give a special shout out to our Learning and Development team, and in particular graduate nurse coordinator Katrina Robinson, for their efforts in ensuring our incoming grads are welcomed, onboarded and provided with ongoing support."

To those joining us from Baffel Creek, Brisbane, Belyanda, Ipswich, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and closer to home – and all other places in between – welcome to South West HHS!



ST GEORGE HOSPITAL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS SERVICE

St George Hospital recently marked a significant milestone—50 years since the opening of its current facility. On Tuesday 25 February, staff, past employees, and community members and partners gathered to commemorate the occasion, reflecting on half a century of dedicated healthcare service.

The hospital, officially opened on 22 February 1975 by the then Minister for Health, the Honourable Llew Edwards, has played a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of generations of Balonne Shire residents.

St George Hospital Director of Nursing, Jeff Potter, said a plaque at the hospital’s entrance still stands as a tribute to that momentous occasion, recognising the contributions of key figures such as Medical Superintendent Dr McDonnell, Nursing Superintendent Montgomery and Manager Gangemi.

“St George Hospital has been a pillar of the community for five decades,” Jeff said.

“The dedication of our staff, past and present, has ensured that we continue to provide high-quality care to our patients. It was wonderful to come together and celebrate this milestone with those who have been part of our journey.”

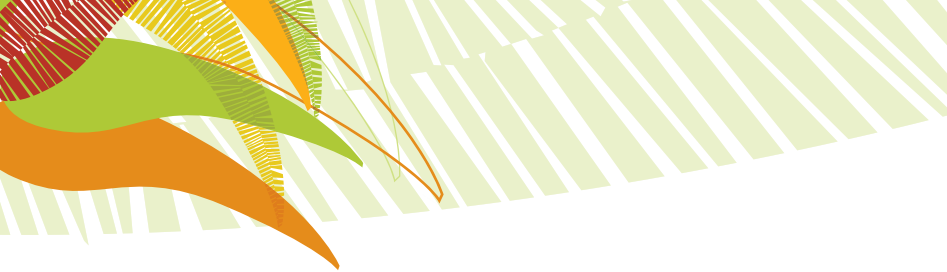
The event brought together special guests, including St George Community Advisory Network members, Goondir Health Service representatives, and Balonne Shire Council representatives.

“A highlight of the day was the attendance of former staff member Roz King, who had the unique experience of working in both the old and new hospital facilities,” Jeff said.

“Attendees enjoyed a delicious BBQ lunch generously hosted, and prepared by, the St George Hospital Medical Team. Special thanks were extended to the operational staff for their efforts in setting up the event and to Goondir Health Service for providing tables and chairs.

“This event was a true team effort. It’s a testament to the strong sense of community that has always been at the heart of St George Hospital. Thank you to all who joined us in marking this special occasion.”

As St George Hospital looks toward the future, this milestone serves as a reminder of its unwavering commitment to delivering compassionate healthcare to the community for generations to come.



INJUNE STAFF MEMBERS FUNDRAISE FOR THE COMMUNITY

In small communities like Injune, the strength of its heart is measured in the dedication and kindness of its people.

Two remarkable members of the Injune MPHS nursing team, Letitia Banks and Kristina Blue, have exemplified this spirit by spearheading a fundraising effort to create something truly special—a BMX Pump Track to be named in honour of a friend, Jake Williams.

A/Director of Nursing at Injune MPHS, Penny Loughnan, said under the banner of the Injune Collective, Letitia and Kristina brought their vision to life, working tirelessly to rally community support.

“Their determination has already made waves, with their inaugural fundraising event, Carols on the Lawn, lighting up the Christmas season with joy and togetherness,” Penny said.

With each event and every dollar raised, this team is turning a dream into reality—one that will bring joy to generations of local children. And in doing so, they will ensure Jake’s name and spirit will forever be part of the Injune community.

“The overwhelming success of that night only fuelled their drive, leading to their latest event—Bowled Over in Style, a Ladies Cricket Day held in February. More than just a fundraiser, Bowled Over in Style was a celebration of community spirit, bringing people together in laughter and friendship.



Injune community fundraiser for pump track

“The event was a testament to the deep connections within the Injune MPHS team, with colleagues coming together in a show of unity and support. Among them were Nicolle Sandhu, Donna Lamberth, Casey Mujdrica, Sarah Stockley, Emily Richards, Rowena Upton, Leanne Taylor, and Alysha Blom—each playing their part in making the day a success.”

Penny said Letitia and Kristina’s passion, highlighted the dedication they have shown to making a lasting impact in the community.

“Their efforts are a reflection of the genuine care and commitment that exists within the South West HHS team, proving once again that small towns truly do rely on big hearts,” she said.



Sgt Daniel Clark accepts donation from resident E. Golding and advanced recreation officer, Patricia Jamieson



RESIDENTS CRAFT COMFORT FOR THOSE IN NEED

Residents at Westhaven Aged Care Facility have been busy creating "worry worms" to support people experiencing mental health challenges and trauma.

Thanks to the wonderful guidance of Advanced Recreation Officer Patricia ‘Trish’ Jamieson, the residents have taken part in every stage of production—from crocheting and knitting to decorating and packaging—turning the project into a true community effort.

Trish said their hard work paid off with a special donation to the Queensland Police Service, where the worry worms would be used to provide comfort to those in distress.

“Local Officer in Charge, Sergeant Daniel Clark, attended a morning tea at Westhaven to accept the donation,” she said.

“He was impressed not only by the craftsmanship but also by the sheer number of worry worms created, noting there were enough to stock every police car across the district.”

This initiative highlights the meaningful contributions aged care residents can make, demonstrating that small acts of kindness can have a lasting impact on the wider community.



STRATEGY UPDATES

CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strategy Updates →

Through our rolling four year Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy, we aim to ensure people and communities are supported wherever they are across the South West, ensuring the same quality of care is available to all and that everyone can be actively involved and engaged in their health services.

With a further six months recently passing by, the following key achievements of note as at 31 December 2024 demonstrate our continuing commitment to partnership working and engagement:

- ✓ Launch of [South West HHS Equity and Diversity Action Plan](#) to build a more sustainable and inclusive workplace.
- ✓ Continuing opportunities to engage communities and consumer representatives in key strategic priorities – including local health and service needs assessment, and co-design of South West HHS’s inaugural [Disability Strategy and Action Plan](#).
- ✓ Year to date complaints management continued to exceed statewide target, with 94% of complaints resolved within 35 days – against a statewide benchmark of 80% – for those not completed within 35 days, primary reasons included additional time required to source information / further engage with consumers to ensure a satisfactory outcome.
- ✓ Consistent rates of website and social media use, following significant peak experienced during COVID-19 response, with:
 - An average of 4,637 people per month accessed the [South West HHS website](#) over the past six months, including our [careers page](#).
 - Continuing to welcome new subscribers to our Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts – so if you are not a following us, join us today!

The next six months to 30 June will see us:

- ➔ Continuing to catch up with our Community Advisory Networks (CAN) online at a CAN Link-Ins, as well as at scheduled Board meetings around the South West.
- ➔ Further progression of First Nations Health Equity Strategy commitments, including developing a zero tolerance statement for racial discrimination and / or institutional racism.
- ➔ Alongside our CAN and wider valued partners continuing to advocate on behalf of South West communities to ensure safe, effective, responsible and sustainable health services that people trust and value.

You can find the strategies and our latest updates online.

CLINICIAN AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Strategy Updates →

In addition to our Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy, we also have a Clinician Engagement strategy in place to outline our approach towards maintaining valued collaboration and input of with our clinicians and employees in the planning, design and delivery of healthcare.

Further highlights over the last six months to 31 December 2024 include:

- ✓ Continuing opportunities to engage staff in key strategic priorities – including local health and service needs assessment, providing further opportunities for state and national advocacy for rural and remote services and communities.
- ✓ Internal Leaders Connect, Administration Network Forum, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Advisory Council and South West HHS Clinical Council meetings.
- ✓ Seeking nominations for a new South West HHS First Nations Peak Advisory Committee, meeting for the first time in March 2025, comprising a wide cross section of South West staff and partners.
- ✓ Ongoing staff achievement and recognition via monthly SWSpirit staff recognition, Pulse articles and regular social media posting - alongside internal weekly eNews, monthly Virtual Town Hall meetings, and promotion of our 24/7 Ask Executive account.
- ✓ Almost 150 peer nominated colleagues recognised at our annual staff awards celebration.

The next six months will also be a busy time as we look to working closely with leaders, teams and all staff across all locations to:

- ➔ Local and organisational wide progression of Cultural Compass insights and action plans to further empower our staff and teams, nurture our culture and drive greater care and innovation opportunities.
- ➔ Continued focus on mandatory training rates, including introduction of updated myPathway / Leader Landscape definitions.
- ➔ Through *Our Way – Together*, our First Nations Health Equity Strategy, progression of a zero tolerance statement for racial discrimination and / or institutional racism, including supporting communications and staff awareness activities.
- ➔ Further co-design in accordance with Operational Plan commitments, other key initiatives and partnership working opportunities.



OUR TEAMS



INTRODUCING NIKKIE KUJAWSKI OUR NEW CLINICAL NURSE CONSULTANT RESEARCH GOVERNANCE COORDINATOR

South West HHS is excited to welcome Nikkie Kujawski as our new Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) Research Governance Coordinator, Quality and Safety.

Nikkie's role is a newly combined position, previously led in part by Robyn Brumpton for the past 14 years, and will focus on two key areas: Research Governance and Clinical Trials Coordination.

In her Research Governance role, Nikkie is here to support colleagues in developing, submitting, and conducting research projects that can enhance healthcare practices and / or patient outcomes. Whether it's navigating ethics submissions, writing applications, or turning an idea into a research project, Nikkie is eager to help.

"Through evidence-based research, we have the opportunity to impact our future practice and make a real difference."

"So, if any staff have ever thought, 'we could do this better,' I would love to hear from them" Nikkie said.

She hopes to foster a culture of continuous learning where research is accessible to all staff—whether through quality improvement initiatives, service delivery projects, or full-scale research publications.

Another key focus of Nikkie's role is coordinating the introduction of clinical trials to South West HHS, with an initial emphasis on teletrials. She will work with sponsors to bring new trials to our region, ensuring that even in our geographically dispersed communities, patients have access to cutting-edge treatments.

"This is a great opportunity for the HHS to get on the Clinical Trial map," Nikkie said.

"If staff hear of a trial or study that we might be able to run, I'd love to know!"

How You Can Get Involved

Nikkie is looking for ways to spread the word about research opportunities and engage more staff in research and trials. If you have an idea for a project, need support with research processes, or want to know more about clinical trials, get in touch!

You can contact Nikkie to discuss research ideas or clinical trials opportunities via: SWHHS_Research@health.qld.gov.au.

[Contact Nikkie →](#)

**Together, we can make
South West HHS a leader
in research-driven,
evidence-based healthcare!**



STRENGTHENING OUR FIRST NATIONS WORKFORCE FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

South West HHS is committed to ensuring the healthcare we provide to First Nations people is culturally safe and of the highest quality.

With a long-term vision to 2031, South West HHS is taking a collective approach to working in genuine partnership with our First Nations communities and stakeholders to deliver real outcomes and sustainable change.

South West HHS Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Engagement, Shelley Lawton, said this commitment was central to improving health equity across the region.

“We are committed to a new collective approach to ensure that by 2031 we deliver real outcomes and long-term change based on genuine partnerships that value the benefits of co-design, co-delivery, and co-implementation,” Shelley said.

She said a key focus of this commitment was developing a strong and culturally safe First Nations workforce.

South West HHS is currently working to:

- Strengthen the workforce to improve outcomes for First Nations consumers
- Develop a culturally safe, skilled, and valued First Nations workforce
- Attract, retain and upskill First Nations staff through targeted initiatives

Shelley said this work aligns with our values and purpose, national and state legislation, service agreements and wider Queensland Health strategies - ensuring a consistent and structured approach.

A review of South West HHS’s Cultural Capability Program has recently been completed, supported with statewide input, to guide the next steps.

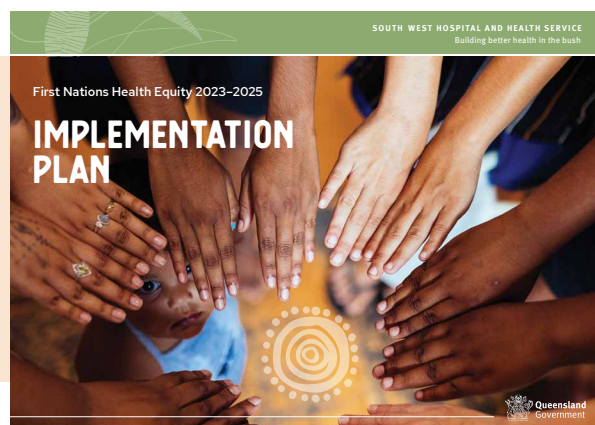
South West HHS has also commenced a First Nations Workforce Review to target and progress:

- Developing a First Nations Workforce Strategy (2023-2026)
- Growing our First Nations workforce
- Ongoing improvements in workforce satisfaction
- Increased recruitment and retention of First Nations staff
- Professional development for Health Workers
- Growth in qualified and credentialed First Nations staff
- Enhanced #myPathway compliance, of at least 85%, including discussions focused on career development
- A progressive increase in First Nations representation in the workforce, with a target of 13% by 2025 (currently this is at 6.78% - and which has seen an overall increase from 60 First Nations employees in July 2023 to 74 by January 2025)
- Developing organisational structures to support cross-agency collaboration
- Piloting initiatives to enable Health Workers to work across the South West HHS and local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), improving career pathways and patient care.

“The upcoming review will assess South West HHS’s compliance with relevant legislation and strategies, as well as progress against Key Priority Area #6. The review’s recommendations will then support South West HHS decision making around workforce to ensure we are well-positioned into the future to support First Nations consumers in their health journey and achieve improved health outcomes,” she said.

She said consultation sessions commenced with the Senior Leaders Forum in mid-February 2025, followed by further engagement with hub and spoke managers and frontline teams in late February and early March.

“All staff, especially First Nations colleagues, are encouraged to contribute their feedback and ideas,” she said.





“External consultations will also take place with key partners, including other HHSs, the Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers, Office of the Chief Allied Health Officer and the First Nations Health Office.

“Discussions are also planned for the next South West First Nations Health Equity Committee meeting which will engage with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) to address current workforce pressures and recruitment challenges.”

All staff and stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the consultation process and help shape the future of First Nations healthcare in the South West.

“South West HHS’s Workforce Strategy reflects our deep commitment to health equity and culturally safe care,” Shelley said.

“By strengthening our First Nations workforce, and also through wider work to support non-Indigenous staff as part of continuing professional development and growth, we are ensuring better health outcomes for our communities – today and into the future.”

The South West HHS is also actively supporting existing career pathways for First Nations people through targeted workforce programs, including:

- Allied Health First Nations Graduate Pathways – Providing employment opportunities post-university
- Queensland Health’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadetship Program – Supporting university students
- Deadly Start School-based Traineeship Program – Engaging high school students (Years 11-12)
- First Nations Health Training Project – Supporting AINs (Assistants in Nursing) to transition into ENs (Enrolled Nurses) (project under development with WQPHN expected to be delivered in coming months)



CLINICAL COUNCIL REVITALISED FOR 2025

The South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) is excited to announce the revitalisation of its Clinical Council for 2025.

This diverse group of professionals is set to work collaboratively, ensuring that the voices of clinicians are central to decision-making and the delivery of quality healthcare across the region.

Clinical Council Chair and Charleville based South West HHS Director of Pharmacy, Mitch Rigby, expressed his enthusiasm about the council’s reformation.

“We have a great team that won’t be afraid to have their say about what is needed at the frontline and what is best for not only our communities but what will work well behind the scenes to ensure this occurs. The Council is a group who will listen to each other, respect each other’s opinions and ideas. We are a committee working together to help make the South West HHS deliver high-quality healthcare,” Mitch said.

Together, the Council will represent a broad spectrum of disciplines, fostering an environment where clinicians can actively contribute to system-wide improvements and quality care.

For the first time, the Clinical Council will meet monthly ensuring a regular forum for collaboration and the sharing of knowledge.

“The Council’s primary mission is to provide leadership and strategic advice on clinical issues, ensuring that the delivery of safe, sustainable, and person-centred care remains at the forefront of South West HHS’s goals. The Clinical Council is poised to be a dynamic force for improving healthcare outcomes, fostering an inclusive, collaborative environment for clinicians, and ensuring that patient care is always at the heart of every decision made,” Mitch said.

“As we look to the year ahead, the Clinical Council will work tirelessly to ensure clinicians’ voices are heard and acted upon, strengthening our commitment to the communities we serve.”

Key functions of the Clinical Council included:

- ✓ Actively contributing to decision-making on the delivery of quality health services across the South West.
- ✓ Representing clinicians in providing strategic advice and leadership on issues that affect quality, safety, and value-based patient care.
- ✓ Valuing consumer perspectives and promoting the voice of the patient at all levels of governance within the care system.
- ✓ Connecting clinicians across the service through collaboratives of practice and improvement.
- ✓ Representing clinicians from all disciplines, ensuring a wide-ranging perspective is considered in decision-making.
- ✓ Providing leadership for health reform and championing innovation.
- ✓ Encouraging stakeholders to empower clinicians to be actively involved in decision-making.
- ✓ Offering constructive, evidence-based advice that aligns with the health reform agenda.



OUR RESOURCES



NEW ROMA EXECUTIVE OFFICE – CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The arrival of the new Executive Office building at the Roma Hospital Campus marks a significant step forward in improving our administrative spaces.

South West HHS Executive Director Governance, Strategy, and Performance Leigh Burton said Health Infrastructure Queensland was currently finalising the tender process for car parking and building connections, with formal approvals and scheduling expected soon.

“Pending final negotiations, the successful tenderer is anticipated to begin work in late March or April. The construction phase is expected to take approximately 18 weeks, with completion targeted for August 2025,” Leigh said.

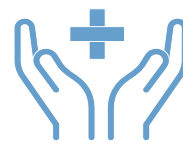
“We appreciate everyone’s patience as we work through this process and will continue to share updates as they become available.”

Leigh said the new office space was an important addition, addressing the need for a more centralised and efficient administrative hub.

“Currently, our teams are spread across multiple locations in Roma, including Roma Hospital, Spencer Street, and Bungil Street. The new building presents an opportunity to consolidate teams, improve collaboration, and reduce leasing costs—allowing us to redirect savings back into frontline services,” he said.

He said the Governance, Strategy, and Performance team was working closely with the Infrastructure Team to ensure a smooth transition.

“We will soon start staff engagement on the co-design process. We already appreciate the enthusiasm and support for this project and look forward to creating a space that enhances our workplace and service delivery. Stay tuned for more updates as we progress toward completion!”



OUR SERVICES

JOINT REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT – SOUTH WEST HHS'S IDENTIFIED NEEDS

During the second half of the 2024 calendar year, South West HHS participated in a Joint Regional Needs Assessment (JRNA) exercise with our Central West and North West HHS colleagues and the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN).

From this body of work – building on extensive prior engagement and consultation activities that delivered a range of key recent publications such as *Our Way – Together*, South West HHS's First Nations Health Equity Strategy, the *Three Seeds* mental health mapping exercise and other key insights – a range of key areas of identified health and service needs were then discussed at October's Community Advisory Network Forum in St George.

Overall, a total of 14 health and 38 service needs were ultimately identified by South West HHS for our communities to inform wider statewide thinking for future priority deliverables for the 2025-2026 Financial Year and beyond.

“While ongoing community sentiment regarding our services is generally positive, significant challenges in terms of cost and other demand pressures - alongside workforce and other infrastructure considerations – remain areas that require ongoing advocacy and support,” Health Service Chief Executive Dr Anthony Brown said.

“These barriers require ongoing advocacy at the highest levels of State and Federal government, with the South West submission presenting a further compelling case to ensure rural and remote Queenslanders receive an equitable share of resourcing and service opportunities.

“For instance, data to inform the JRNA documents demonstrates the significant impacts South West HHS, alongside our partners, has made towards moving the dial in health outcomes. These efforts take considerable time, ongoing dedication and commitment – and we still have a way to go in some cases – but I thank you all for your continued efforts, evident commitment and willingness to innovate as we work together to address these important challenges.”

Alongside JRNA development, and forthcoming engagement to define our next three year service agreement with Queensland Health, these identified needs provide a strong foundation to ensure continued focus within the wider statewide picture to ensure equitable and supportive care and prevention services that meet the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

You can access a summary of our identified health and service needs on our website.

[Find out more →](#)



Health / healthcare needs are those that can benefit from health care (health education, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, terminal care) and incorporate the wider social and environmental determinants of health, such as deprivation, housing, diet, education, employment. This wider definition enables inclusion of the wider influences on health beyond the confines of the medical model based on health services.



Service needs articulate the identified mismatch between health needs and demand, and the service capability and supply, now and into the future.



QUALITY OF CARE UPDATE

To supplement our Annual Report and other performance reporting South West HHS also generates a local bi-annual *Quality of Care Report* for the wider information of the South West community.

This six monthly summary provides a short snapshot of wider service delivery and an opportunity to reflect on key achievements, recent challenges and how these might have been resolved as well as sharing areas of focus for the months ahead.

Greater transparency through data is a key driver in supporting positive growths and outcomes – and working rural and remote health is both complex and challenging – however in the six months to December 2024, South West HHS's key achievements included:

- ✓ Forward opportunities to engage staff, communities and partners in development of key strategic priorities – including:
 - new Equity and Diversity Action Plan to build a more sustainable and inclusive workplace
 - a co-designed Disability Strategy and Action Plan, co-designed with people who use our services and staff to ensure a more equitable and inclusive service
 - development of a local health and service needs assessment, providing further opportunities for state and national advocacy of rural and remote services and the needs of the communities we serve.
- ✓ Ongoing meetings of the South West HHS First Nations Health Equity Committee, comprising Chief Executive Officers of our key partners, to drive forward First Nations Health Equity commitments.
- ✓ Continued delivery of our Clinician and Employee Engagement Strategy and Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy - you can find six month progress updates at respective pages on our website, and also in this edition of the Pulse.
- ✓ Alongside our key partners, continuing to provide a range of health, mental wellbeing and resilience promotion activities across South West communities.
- ✓ Progressed a range of key infrastructure projects, including formal openings of our new Community Clinic at Morven, and Community and Allied Health Service buildings at St George and Charleville.
- ✓ Almost 150 peer nominated colleagues recognised at annual staff awards.

As we move towards the end of another Financial Year, by 30 June 2025 we will continue to progress our key commitments and accountabilities for our staff, communities and partners, including:

- ➔ Progression of First Nations Health Equity *Our Way – Together* commitments, including a zero tolerance statement for racial discrimination and / or institutional racism, supporting communications and staff awareness activities and participating in a statewide review of Cultural Practice training.
- ➔ Continuing to ensure models of care meet local needs in a sustainable manner.
- ➔ Further progress our commitments towards reducing historical health inequalities, promoting partnership working, improving our working environments and defining new models of service and care for the benefit of South West communities.
- ➔ Continuing the work of the South West Queensland Primary Care Collaborative, Darling Downs-South West HHS Medical Pathway and other nursing, allied health and profession specific initiatives to enable our staff work to top of scope in a clinically safe and sustainable way.

You can access our update, and previous editions of *Quality of Care* documents, on our website.

Find out more →

“In keeping with other health providers, our challenges included ongoing demands on our staff, particularly within the context of national workforce pressures and increasing demands on patient services – such as securing external staffing and locums – which continue to be appropriately risk managed to ensure continuity of safe and effective services.

Despite these challenges, and through the ongoing hard work and dedication of our staff and teams, South West HHS has continued to deliver high rates of performance against our key targets and measures – and this truly inspirational dedication and commitment continues to be recognised and truly appreciated by both the Executive Team and our Board and also at the highest levels within Queensland Health.”

Health Service Chief Executive Dr Anthony Brown



January 2025 #swSpirit

Celebrating excellence: Sashia Hilton

As a dedicated member of the CIO Rural and Remote Technology Services Management Team, Sashia embodies the South West HHS values of compassion, adaptability, engagement, and quality in everything she does.

Sashia plays a crucial role in ensuring our technology services support healthcare delivery across the region. She is known for her solution-focused approach, unwavering dedication, and ability to go above and beyond—often at all hours of the day or night—to ensure our teams have the connectivity and support they need.

Leanne Patton, Group Director of Nursing & Midwifery and Facility Manager, Charleville Hospital, praised Sashia’s commitment to problem-solving and disaster preparedness, particularly her efforts in securing connectivity solutions for Cunnamulla and Thargomindah to enhance medical emergency response and staff safety.

“Sashia has been an amazing support since she joined the South West HHS ICT Team as Manager. She is always solution-focused, making sure all opportunities are explored with her team to solve problems in projects and disaster preparedness,” Leanne said.

“Most particularly, she has been the key driver in getting solutions for Cunnamulla and Thargomindah to try to ensure some form of connectivity for medical emergencies and staff safety. Her diligence and affability, even at strange hours of the night or morning, are her most valuable assets. It’s always a pleasure to work with Sashia.”

Dr Carl de Wet, Executive Director of Medical Services and Clinical Governance, highlighted Sashia’s ability to manage the complex, time-sensitive, and dynamic challenges of ICT in healthcare with professionalism and composure.

“Information and Communication Technology is essential for contemporary, high-quality healthcare,” Carl said.

“In her role as the South West HHS ICT Manager, Sashia needs to respond to time-critical, complex and dynamic issues all hours of the day while also securing and strengthening our future preparedness. She balances competing priorities and challenges in a consistently professional and calm manner that exemplifies our organisational values.”

Chris Small, Executive Director Nursing and Midwifery Services, praised Sashia for always providing invaluable, sensible and practical advice.

“She is always available to assist in navigating IT systems, issues, implementations and improvements across the South West HHS since she started with us,” Chris said.

“I have always found her insights and assistance invaluable to ensuring that the HHS has the access and systems that meet the requirements of our needs. Anytime that there have been IT problems or critical tasks Sashia has ensured that she is available and always willing to jump in and assist.”

He said in her time with the South West HHS she has made all things IT “easier, understandable and continually progressing in the right direction”.

“She embodies our values and is amazing at ensuring that our frontline staff have the right tools for the job. Thanks Sashia.”

Congratulations, Sashia, and thank you for your dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the South West HHS!

February 2025 #swSpirit

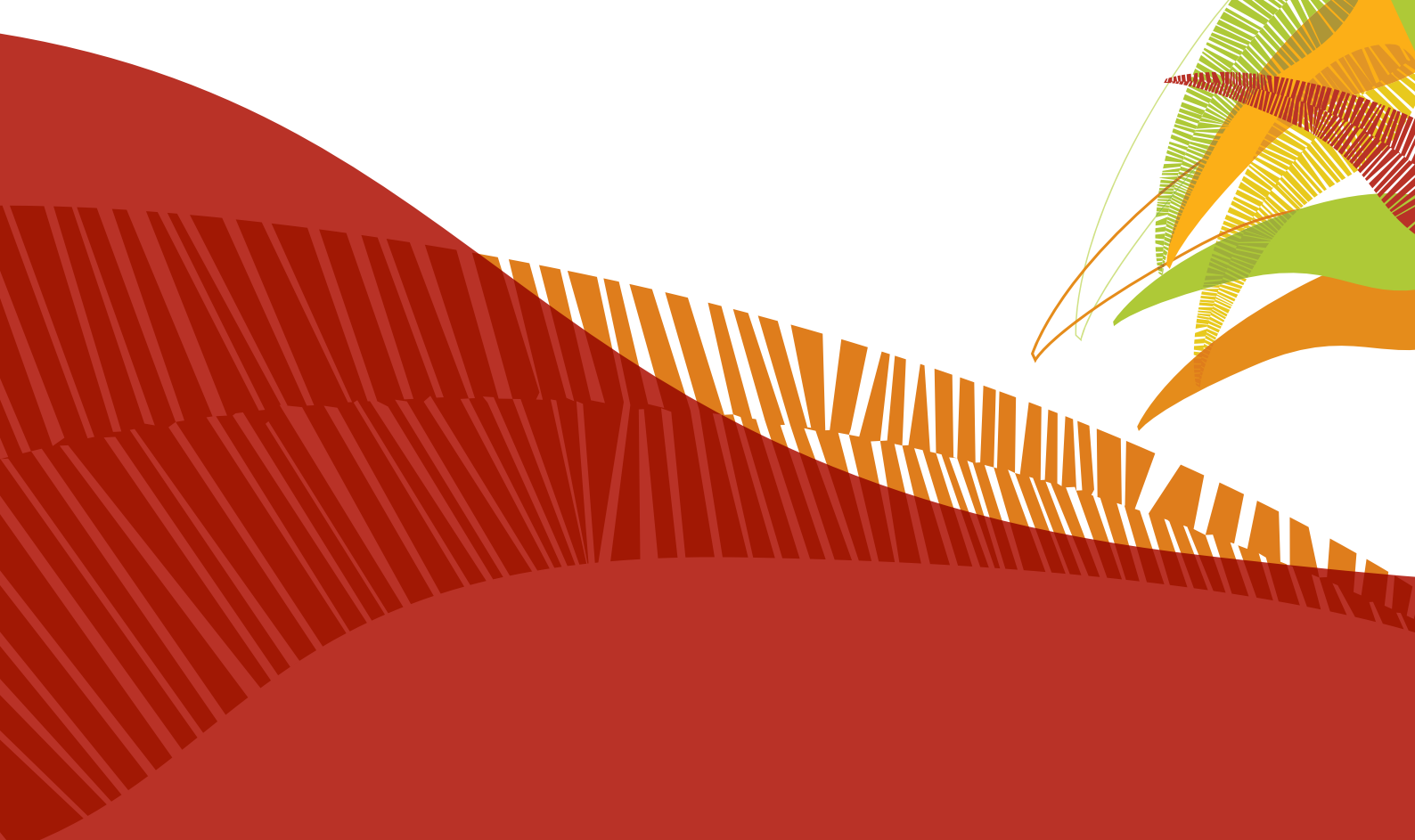
Congratulations to David Watts from Quilpie!

A few words from Kylie Keegan, Coordinator Operational Services

Kylie praised David, affectionately known as ‘Roo’ for his attention to detail and the way he exemplifies the South West HHS values in particular quality, accountability and adaptability. He always is meticulous in his role as the grounds and maintenance specialist in Quilpie.

A shout out to one of our shining stars in the West (as we are blessed to have several) – David – more commonly known by staff as “Roo”. Roo is our grounds and maintenance specialist at Quilpie. Something that caught my eye during a site visit was that Roo has been propagating cuttings to fill garden beds at Quilpie. The Quilpie grounds are lush with green grass, gardens are maintained flowing with greenery. In dry times this is an oasis for staff and community members – thank you for your hard work and dedication.





southwest.health.qld.gov.au

